

Why attend a homeschool convention this year?

by Andrew Pudewa



Time is precious. Money can be tight. Travel must be prioritized. And, almost all the information you will ever need can be found online. So, is going to a conference really worth it?

I have been to many conferences—hundreds, actually. Of course, I go because it's my job. Although I primarily teach workshops and hang out near the IEW booth, I also meet fascinating people and listen to a variety of workshops. Now obviously, not every conference is a peak experience, and some are far more interesting than others, but I think it's safe to say that almost always something helpful, even enlightening happens, and often I don't even notice it until weeks or months later.

A friend of a friend once articulated for me something we all instinctively know: "Teaching is the overflow of the soul of the teacher to the soul of the student." To do that, of course, the teacher's soul must be full. Yes, we can read stuff. We can watch videos. We can pray. But for so many of us, the busyness of life makes all those things we can and should do to fill ourselves up somewhat less important than the crisis of the moment. (And in homeschooling, there always seems to be a crisis of the moment!)



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In reality, a conference is a retreat—a place to gather with like-minded people, see and hear new ideas, ask questions, and contemplate. Even if the talks you attend aren't the “incredible” talks that change one's life, there are ideas everywhere, and I've found that one small idea from an unexpected source can improve my life forever. Sometimes those ideas don't even come from speakers or workshops, but from one-on-one conversations with other homeschooling parents.

Taking the time to attend a convention is a little bit like doing exercise or practicing music: You may not want to do it before you do it, but after you do do it, you are happier for having done it. So step out, get yourself to a convention this year, fill yourself with inspiration and ideas, make some new friends, and if you're afraid of the exhibit hall, just don't go in! (Although that's where you'll usually find me, and I do hope you'll come by and say hello if we're at the same show.)

Blessings to you and yours,
Andrew

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